

Sermon: Mark 1: 14 - 20

Grace Church, Jeff City

When we know it is Jesus who calls us, we can trust that he does not take us away from what gives us life, but draws us into deeper life - orienting our life around PEOPLE.

Intro

Why is it that when Jesus asks Simon and Andrew to step away from their nets and follow him, they do it immediately - but when I ask my children to put on their shoes, well, let's just say that "immediately" is not how I would categorize their response!? What is it about this bizarre phrase "fishers of people," that made grown ups lay down their only source of income to stick closely by the side of an itinerant preacher?

Good morning! I'm Rev Erin Pickersgill, and I was delighted to be invited here by Father Bill to come and be with you. My role in the diocese is called "Ministry Developer for Children and Youth," and I've now been in my post for 6 months full time. I come bearing a lot of love for you and compassion for those who are working with this group of people. I'm curious about how it's going for you, working with Children and youth - and families - because if you're anything like

most of the other churches in the diocese - this is hard, confusing, and sometimes disheartening work. I'm here to support your dreams and efforts in this, and (Different if at later service - recap our Adult Forum chats) we're going to talk more about that in the forum between services. I hope to see you there.

Body

I have a good problem as a parent - my children love to read. It's a good problem, I keep reminding myself. It just means that one of the most often heard phrases in my house is, "Can I finish my page?"

This week, as I sat with Mark's gospel text, I imagined my children sitting by the lake, noses in books. Jesus passes by and asks them to come with him. (Already there are problems with this exercise - Stranger Danger! Perhaps this is why, when Jesus talks about children, he lets them come to him - he doesn't drag them off somewhere. Jesus was King of Safe Church.) But I imagine Jesus noticing that my children are super into books and that strikes him as really important. And so he comforts them and intrigues them all in one, by saying something like - Come with me, and I will make you readers of people!

Because, as you may well already know, Jesus is not a great Depriver of Joy and resources. Jesus comes to give life, and to the fullest. It's fish that you love!? It's fishing that gives you life, stability, community, livelihood, a sense of purpose, a connection with nature? Then come with me, I will make you fishers of people.

It doesn't take a theologian to see that what Jesus does is invite them to change their profession and their talent from something that brings them money, to something that brings them community.

I wonder what that means to you, that Jesus called his first disciples by compelling them with this phrase. There must have been something about this that allowed them enough courage to drop their nets and follow him. And yet, for me, and for anyone else who has ever come into contact with high control religious settings, spiritual abuse, religious trauma or narcissism - fishing for people sets off all my alarm bells. Fishing for people sounds - sneaky, conniving and maybe - not great for the fish?

This week, a very clever friend gave me wisdom about this passage. (I strongly advise having wise and clever friends. If you don't have one yet I can share this one with you.) He said the fishermen fished, they caught fish to be eaten - they were for the fishermen's nourishment. Perhaps Jesus is asking them to fish for people - a wide variety of people! - who will nourish

their souls, build the Kingdom and family of God. Could Jesus have been saying - Come with me, I'll make you orient your life around people who will nourish you and give you purpose, much more than a slimy fish could!!? yes! It is people that Jesus orients our lives around. It is relationships. It is people whom Jesus loves and invites us to love, too.

I think this is what Jesus does here in Mark 1, and then throughout the Gospels, and then even in my life - is he takes my loves and desires and multiples them, and gives them back to me in more profound and beautiful ways.

In the town I used to live in in England, we walked everywhere. Several times a day, I had to pass people who were trying to either sell me something or have me give money to a particular charity. I never ever listened to them. I was never drawn in. Why? Because they didn't know me.

Let me assure you, if my best friend, or my husband, or my mom said to me - you have to read this book, or listen to this podcast, or make this recipe, or dance to this song in your kitchen - *I do it every time*. I do it because they know me and they love me and they like me and they respect me.

It is out of Jesus' deep admiration and respect for Simon and Andrew that he asks them to follow him. And they dropped everything and followed Jesus.

Jesus has no expectation that Andrew and Simon would become his private chefs, or build him a house, or care for his and others' medical needs. Here is what I love about Jesus: he calls the fishermen to be...fishermen, still.

Jesus approaches you, on the lake shore of your particular life. You are up to something - something you've always done or something you are very good at. And Jesus wonders aloud next to you - "I wonder what it would be like if *this* was all about the *people I love*. Would you like to come find out?" Following Jesus closely is less about giving it all up, but about loving those that He loves. May we all have the courage to love more deeply, those who Christ is asking us to find.